

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

~~Please add the following Claims 10, 11, 12 and 13:~~

~~--10. The process of Claim 1 wherein 0.2 to 2.5 wt. % hydrogen peroxide, in relation to the dry cellulose ether, is used.~~

~~11. The process of Claim 1 wherein 0.5 to 1.8 wt. % hydrogen peroxide, in relation to the dry cellulose ether, is used.~~

~~12. The process of Claim 1 wherein a higher-molecular cellulose ether with a solid content of 40 to 55 wt. %, in relation to the total quantity of cellulose ether and solvent, is used.~~

~~13. The process of Claim 6 wherein the pH value of the mixture is set at 6 to 7.--~~

~~Please replace Claim 1 with the following:~~

~~(Once Amended, Clean) A process for the production of low-viscosity water-soluble cellulose ethers by oxidative decomposition of higher-viscosity cellulose ethers with hydrogen peroxide, comprising:~~

- ~~(a) forming, under conditions of intensive mixing and at temperatures of 65 - 125°C, a mixture comprising, (i) higher-viscosity cellulose ethers, and (ii) an aqueous solution of hydrogen peroxide, the proportions of the mixture being selected in such a way that the hydrogen peroxide content is 0.1 - 10 wt.% in relation to the dry cellulose ether, the solid content of the mixture is no lower than 25 wt.% in relation to the total quantity of the mixture; and~~
- ~~(b) agitating continuously the mixture of step (a) at temperatures of 65 - 125°C until approximately at least 90% of the hydrogen peroxide has been spent.~~

~~Please replace Claim 2 with the following.~~

~~2. (Once Amended, Clean) The process of Claim 1 wherein mixing with the aqueous hydrogen peroxide solution is carried out step-by-step.~~

~~Please replace Claim 3 with the following.~~

~~3. (Once Amended, Clean) The process of Claim 1 wherein the mixture is agitated continuously at temperatures of 75 - 100°C.~~

~~Please replace Claim 4 with the following.~~

~~4. (Once Amended, Clean) The process of Claim 1 wherein 0.1 to 10~~

wt.% hydrogen peroxide in relation to the dry cellulose ether is used.

~~Please replace Claim 5 with the following.~~

5. (Once Amended, Clean) The process of Claim 1 wherein a higher-molecular cellulose ether with a solid content of 35 - 80 wt.%, in relation to the total quantity of cellulose ether and solvent, is used.

~~Please replace Claim 6 with the following.~~

6. (Once Amended, Clean) The process of Claim 1 wherein before, during or preferably after the decomposition reaction, the pH value of the mixture is set at more than 4.5, by mixing it with an aqueous solution which has a pH of 5 to 12 and optionally contains, in solution, the hydrogen peroxide required for the decomposition reaction.

~~Please replace Claim 7 with the following.~~

7. (Once Amended, Clean) The process of Claim 1 wherein the water soluble cellulose ether is selected from carboxymethyl cellulose, hydrophobically modified carboxymethyl cellulose, hydroxyethyl carboxymethyl cellulose, sulfoethyl cellulose, hydrophobically modified sulfoethyl cellulose, hydroxyethyl sulfoethyl cellulose, hydrophobically modified hydroxyethyl sulfoethyl cellulose, hydroxyethyl cellulose, hydrophobically modified hydroxyethyl cellulose, methyl cellulose, methylhydroxyethyl cellulose, methylhydroxyethyl sulfoethyl cellulose, hydrophobically modified methylhydroxyethyl cellulose, methylhydroxypropyl cellulose, hydroxypropyl cellulose and mixtures thereof.

~~Please replace Claim 8 with the following.~~

8. (Once Amended, Clean) The process of Claim 1 wherein the water-soluble cellulose ether is selected from methylcellulose, methyl hydroxyethyl cellulose, hydrophobically modified methyl hydroxyethyl cellulose, methyl hydroxypropyl cellulose, hydroxypropyl cellulose, mixtures thereof, and water-wet filter cakes of these cellulose ethers, as obtained after washing and separation.

~~Please replace Claim 9 with the following.~~

9. (Once Amended, Clean) The process of Claim 1 wherein the water soluble cellulose ether is selected from methyl hydroxyethyl cellulose, methyl hydroxypropyl cellulose, and water-wet filter cakes of these cellulose ethers, as obtained after washing and separation.